

SHEEP CREEK GEOGRAPHIC AREA

Setting

The area is located approximately 55 miles northwest of the city of Fort Collins and approximately 10 miles north of the settlement of Red Feather Lakes. The elevation varies from 8,000 to 9,000 feet. The northern part of the area is characterized by open parks surrounded by ponderosa and lodgepole pine which gradually lead to a landscape dominated by sagebrush as it approaches the Wyoming border. The southern part of the area is dominated by thick stands of lodgepole pine with openings mostly restricted to stream courses. The North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River borders the southeast edge of the area. Important big-game migration corridors and wintering areas are present. Moose populations are increasing. Greenback cutthroat trout have been transplanted into two streams in the area. Viable turkey habitat has been identified. The water resource in the area is highly regulated by the reservoir owners.

Vegetation management has occurred throughout the area for the past 100 years beginning with tie cutting for the railroads. Recent harvesting on federal lands had been limited primarily to small sales due to limited access. Past harvesting on the recently acquired lands has created stand conditions where dwarf mistletoe is prevalent. Early and late structural stages are underrepresented in all tree-cover types. Aspen is being replaced by conifers as the stands age increase. There are six livestock grazing allotments, two of them vacant. Recreational use has been increasing in parallel with private-land acquisition. Use is low during most of the year, but increases significantly during big-game hunting seasons. There are no developed recreational facilities. Private development is increasing on the northwest side of the area. National Forest landownership was consolidated in 1994 with the purchase of 18,764 acres from Union Pacific Resources. A partnership with Colorado State University involving research in the riparian ecosystems in the Sheep Creek area has been an ongoing project for the last 20 years.

The current transportation system's primary access routes are the Cherokee Park Road (Larimer County 80C), Sand Creek Pass Road (Larimer County 80C) and Pearl Beaver Road (FDR 169). There is an extensive network of secondary roads, both National Forest System and user-created. There are no system trails within the area. Motorized winter travel occurs primarily in the southern and western portions of the area.

Goals and Desired Conditions

Create watchable wildlife opportunities throughout the area.

Seek opportunities to improve conditions in the Upper Sand Creek watershed, which was rated Class III (non-functional) in the watershed condition assessment. Improve fisheries in all streams. Fishing pressure has increased along areas of Sheep Creek.

Maintain healthy willow communities in areas used by moose.

Manage activities to protect existing greenback cutthroat trout habitat and populations and enhance recovery.

The wildland fire management strategy is perimeter control. Emphasize ecological values in steep terrain or non-roaded areas. In areas adjacent to private lands along the east and southeast edges of the geographic area, the wildland fire management strategy is direct control.

Manage rangelands toward desired plant communities and management objectives as outlined in management plans for specific allotments.

Close the Diamond Peak and Boulder Ridge grazing allotments, now vacant, to provide big-game habitat and reduce riparian conflicts.

Continue research partnership with Colorado State University.

Management Area 1.5

Emphasize wild and scenic river management.

Timber harvest is not allowed. Weigh ecological and other resource values equally. Accept insect and disease losses.

Eliminate motorized use. Maintain the area's undeveloped character by prohibiting additional trails.

Management Area 3.5

Emphasize wildlife habitat.

Manage vegetation to provide the needed mix of wildlife habitats, reduce fuel loadings, produce timber products, scenic enhancements and rehabilitation of landscape elements. Maintain the ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir components in the landscape. Increase the amount of aspen through application of harvest and prescribed fire in the lodgepole pine type. Emphasize recruitment and retention of old growth. Prevent insect and disease losses through the creation of conditions which make insect and disease epidemics unlikely. Timber harvest is probable in the Bull Mountain, Beaver Creek and Green Mountain areas.

Prescribed fire (including nonlethal, mixed/variable and stand-replacement fires) may be implemented in the nonmotorized portions of the area. Prescribed fire (including nonlethal understory and mixed/variable fires) may be implemented in ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine in conjunction with vegetation manipulation.

Maintain wildlife migration routes. Maintain and improve big-game winter and transition range through vegetation management and prescribed fire.

Manage area where suitable turkey habitat has been identified to provide for turkey reintroduction.

Maintain big-game habitat.

Reduce or eliminate environmental or visual impact problems. This may include activities such as designating dispersed sites, closing areas to camping and developing a campground.

Nonsystem roads already inventoried may be added to the existing transportation system for motorized opportunities. Close all other nonsystem roads. Nonmotorized recreation opportunities including horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking may be provided on existing travelways which have been closed to motorized use. Roads and trails causing resource damage may be closed.

Improve public access into portions of the area. This may include developing trailheads along the main access roads and nonmotorized trails into part of the area. Motorized and nonmotorized winter use will be allowed, but not specifically managed.

Use temporary access roads, where necessary, to achieve fuels reduction, improve wildlife habitat, produce timber products, enhance scenic qualities, and rehabilitate landscape elements; close and obliterate roads once the activity is completed.

Management Area 5.11

Emphasize forest products.

Manage vegetation to provide the needed mix of wildlife habitats, reduce fuel loadings, produce timber products, scenic enhancements and rehabilitation of landscape elements. Maintain the ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir components in the landscape. Increase the amount of aspen through application of harvest and prescribed fire in the lodgepole pine type. Emphasize recruitment and retention of old growth. Prevent insect and disease losses through the creation of conditions which make insect and disease epidemics unlikely. Timber harvest is probable in the Bull Mountain, Beaver Creek and Green Mountain areas.

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Travel Management Strategy, Sheep Creek Geographic Area

Management Area	Mode	Existing System	Convert Ways	New Rds/Trls	Extent of Additions	Extent of Obliterations
1.5	4WD	N	N	N	N	N
	MTR	N	N	N	N	N
	WMT	N	N	N	N	N
	WNM	Y	N	N	N	N
	NMT	N	N	N	N	N
3.5	4WD	Y	Y	N	M	H
	MTR	N	N	N	N	N
	WMT	Y	N	N	N	N
	WNM	Y	N	N	N	N
	NMT	N	Y	Y	L	L
5.11	4WD	Y	Y	N	L	L
	MTR	N	N	N	N	N
	WMT	Y	N	N	N	N
	WNM	Y	N	N	N	N
	NMT	N	Y	Y	L	N

